AMENDMENTS

In the Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for removing a resist from a SiON liner on a hard mask constituted mostly of carbon on a semiconductor substrate, comprising:

providing an etching plasma comprising at least hydrogen at a predetermined temperature level and a predetermined pressure level in a reaction chamber; and

etching the resist selectively to the mask with the plasma for a predetermined period of time.

2. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the etching plasma comprises of a predetermined amount of nitrogen as a diluent.

3. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 2, wherein a ratio of nitrogen to hydrogen is varied starting from a standard nitrogen to hydrogen mixture of 96:4 to a stronger hydrogen rich chemistry based on an intended application.

4. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the etching plasma is comprised of a predetermined amount of CF_4.

5. (Original) The method according to claim 4, wherein the predetermined amount is less than 5 per cent.

6. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the etching plasma is free of oxygen.

7. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the predetermined pressure level of the etching plasma is in the range of 50 to 300 Pa.

8. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the predetermined temperature is in the range of 150°C to 350°C.

9 and 10. (Canceled)

11. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the resist is a carbon-based photo resist.

12. (Canceled)

13. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the semiconductor substrate is a Si-substrate.

14. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the resist has a selectivity to the mask equal or higher than 10.

15. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the resist is stripped with an across wafer non-uniformity of <3% one sigma.

16. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein the resist ~~mask~~ is stripped completely from the surface of the semiconductor substrate.